

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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## THE ART OF REPAIRING NOVELS

By George T. Flaum

Can anything be done to save a novel that is brittle? What can one do to repair a novel that has been rolled and has uneven edges? Can stamp marks be removed? What is the best way to remove labels and stickers? Just how does one go about the job of repairing damaged novels?

These and many other questions relating to damaged novels have presented themselves to the writer who, not having the patience of Job or the know-how, consulted with Harold C. Farmer of Lansing, Michigan, for the answers.

According to Mr. Farmer, there is no substitute for a novel in A-1 condition and even the best repair job frequently fails to cure the defect. But, as he so wisely points out, a novel in good repair is better than none at all and, in answer to a barrage of questions, has passed along much valuable information which has been incorporated in this article.

The first step toward the renovation of a brittle novel is to humidify it. And the crudest way to do this is to hold the novel over a steaming kettle of water. Another method is to place a wire grill over a pan of hot water. A third and better way is to place the novel on an elevated grill in a metal container, such as a bread box or a roasting pan, one third full of scalding water. The stiff and brittle paper will soon become pliable when the cover is closed. There are other methods which will doubtless occur to the reader, for the object of humidification is to allow sufficient

moisture to pass over the novel to permeate the dried and lifeless pulp.

Rolled novels are a source of trouble. Frequently, one may find a novel that would be in perfect condition, except for its uneven edges. According to Mr. Farmer, this condition can be corrected and made like new again. He first suggests that the spinal section should be thoroughly humidified. Then the outside edges are brought into alignment with the fingers, and having covered the novel with several thicknesses of brown paper, carefully iron with a hot iron in a west to east motion toward the spinal section. If the novel has been badly rolled, it is best to take it apart and humidify and iron each page separately. When all the pages have been properly attended to, the novel can then be reassembled and clipped together. Using this method he cautions the use of a medium hot iron.

If the novel is in need of light trimming, use a sharp razor blade, preferably in a metal holder which can be purchased in any stationery store, and a brass bound ruler. When cutting extensively, change the blade frequently and, if possible, use small metal cabinet makers clamps to hold the novel and the ruler rigid to the cutting board.

The removal of ink stamp marks defies solution. Don Leonard of Arlington, Mass., reported that he has tried ink eradicator with fair success. Mr. Farmer has tried a number of methods and has come to the conclusion that any chemical strong enough to remove the ink stamping will also damage the novel and in most cases it is best to leave them alone. Stamp



marks, he adds, are the bane of all collectors and as far as he knows will have to go on being so, for there is no satisfactory solution to this problem.

Stickers and labels can be removed in a number of ways. Mr. Farmer has steamed and has soaked them off and in some instances has placed the entire novel cover in a pan of water without damage. He has never had the colors run. The labels and stickers must be painstakingly removed and the cover allowed to dry until barely damp. It can then be ironed smooth between layers of brown paper, using a medium hot iron. Do not use newspapers for this work.

Sometimes it is necessary to remove a light film of glue that remains after the label has been removed. This can be done by using a diluted solution of alcohol or a sharp pen knife. Needless to say, extreme care must be used.

In discussing other problems relating to the repair of novels, Mr. Farmer had this to say: Rusty staples can be removed by nipping them close to the bend where the staple enters the spine of the novel. Another method is to open the novel to the center section and, by using a pen knife, carefully bend back the staple ends and draw them out from the outside of the novel. In the case of brittle novels, first humidify and then use the wire nipping method.

When repairing torn and mutilated covers, Mr. Farmer begins work from the inside and frequently matches the original ink with water colors. Of all the adhesives he has used, he likes Le Pages musilage the best. The writer recalls that some years ago when visiting Tillman Le Blanc, of Fall River, Mass., who also does very fine work renovating novels, Mr. Le Blanc told him that he used a liquid cement almost exclusively. So take your pick or try both.

In concluding his remarks, Mr. Farmer stated that he was pessimistic about collecting repaired novels and that except for ones own amusement, there is no material reward for the cash value of the novel is but little enhanced. He also added that some novels seem to remain brittle regardless of humidification. Saving novels that might otherwise end their days in the trash can has given him a great

deal of personal satisfaction and his only remuneration are a goodly number of examples of his workmanship of which he is justly proud.

The writer must be frank in admitting that he has neither the patience or the ability to repair novels but he has greatly admired the examples of the handiwork turned out by such experts as Harold Farmer and Tillman Le Blanc who have enjoyed great success in the laudable work of saving the old-timers of a by-gone day.

### LET'S PUSH BACK THE CLOCK by One of the Boys

In quite a number of the issues of that dee-light-ful pee-re-odical the Roundup, published by Ralph Cummings, I have noticed an article here and there written by one of the Brotherhood who sliced off a bit of his early youth that had quite mite of interest tucked away inside the paragraphs.

Now it seems to me that possibly there's a slice I can hand out and it gives me a bit of pleasure to recall a few items that at the time when it happened was of general interest: It must have been because the N. Y. Times printed an article about it daily and on Sunday in their Rotogravure section a full page was devoted to pictures—taken by yours truly.

How many of you buckaroos remember an event that started on Lincoln's Birthday, Feb. 12th, 1908, namely an automobile race that started from Times Sq. N. Y. and was to end in Paris. In those days automobile manufacturers did most of their advertising by putting their product through the paces, and many of em were quite stiff, considering we did not have the roads and the perfection of the modern cars.

Well to get on with the story, there were six cars entered in this endurance race, only one American car, the Thomas Flyer, manufactured in Buffalo, N. Y. Magazines have published stories about this race from time to time and I wonder how many of you ever heard about it. Only three were worth mentioning because only three ever got as far as San Francisco. The first to arrive was the Thomas Car, then the German Zust and the De Deon. To me knowing what I did a-



bout the schinanagins the race was not a bit fair. The American car had parts shipped all along the line, an advantage the foreign cars did not. Only two cars ever got to Paris, the Thomas and the Züst. The Züst arrived first but was given a set back on the time due to some short cut they made. I had oodles of clippings and pictures on the event, but at that time did not realize that some day I wish I had kept em. The original Thomas car was on display a few years ago at an old auto show and did it bring back memories to me. It was, what was left of it, bought by the Dupont people as a relic for four thousand bucks.

I had been doing newspaper photography for a few years prior to the event and by chance happened to drop in on a firm called Spooner and Wells who did nothing but photograph automobiles, the Vanderbilt Cup Races on L. I., the Glidden Tours, in fact anything that brought the automobiles to the attention of the public. I had been in their offices but a few minutes when they asked me if I would undertake an assignment to cover this race, all the way to Paris. Would I. Being only 19 at the time and a great reader of Pluck and Luck, Work and Win, etc., etc., I grabbed the chance. By this time the cars were adready in Indiana plowing through snow and what not. So that same night loaded down with plenty of heavy clothes, boots and camera, I caught a train for Buffalo where I was to make final arrangement with the Thomas people. They gave me instructions and with two hundred bucks for temporary expense money I caught a train for Chicago. From there on I had to watch for the progress of the cars and get off to join the Thomas car wherever it happened to be.

About 4 a.m. one morning, I got off at a small town in Iowa called Missouri Valley. Look it up yourself if interested. Well about 7:30 the Thomas heaved in sight and they stopped for me but were so loaded down they could not take me on and suggested going on to Omaha, Neb., where they intended an overhaul and I could go on from there. On board the car they had a swell guy the driver named Monty Roberts who by the way is still alive today. Then there were two me-

chanics, Miller and Schuster, a damn tough hombre if ever I saw one, and more about him later. The other was a Capt. Hanson long since under the daisies who was supposed to help guide them through Russia. He was supposed to be an old explorer and knew all about Russia. He proved a terrible wash out, but being under contract they had to keep him. Boy he could pose all over the place as a big shot, but I liked him a lot.

So in order to make photos of the Thomas car as it came along I would ride in a pilot car. They usually hired one to show them the way for a few hundred miles when another would take its place. The first pilot car was a Reo roadster, A Gentleman's Roadster they called it. Well neither the Thomas nor the Reo had even a windshield. From town to town, sometimes twenty miles and more apart we tore over roads that were simply no roads at all. Not like today me lads. Those cars really took an awful beating. In every town great crowds would gather to see the car as naturally news of that nature caused excitement. So I'd get photos of them digging out of snow banks, car coming along on the prairies and in fact anything that seemed of interest. The way the crowds acted we were all heroes, autos to them in those days were something out of this world. To them it was just as big an event as when Lindbergh came up Broadway with a snow storm of papers thrown from the buildings.

I could not send my pictures back to N. Y. by wire as they do today, I had to ship them by train and of course it was weeks later that they finally appeared.

There was so much to relate on this trip that it would take a full book, but I'll just try and give you some highlights. I did my share of digging when they were badly stuck along with the camera work, but at that age it did not seem like much. Today I can't even shovel the snow away from the front of the house without puffing like a steam engine.

We finally landed in Cheyenne, Wyo. with the usual crowd of hero worshippers messing around and in Cheyenne was where I loused up the entire trip for myself. We came back to Schuster now. He was the grumpiest guy I ever met up with and my being the young-



est did he take it out on me, especially after what happened between Cheyenne and Laramie. I think I hate the guy yet. After the day's run most of 'em were dead fagged out and in bad spirits, but Schuster, well he let it out on everybody especially me, the boy hero. Tell ye why I capped the climax. It was dead easy in those days to buy a gun. So I bought a 38 Iver Johnson figgerin on doing a bit of popping en route. They had a few rifles along and between Cheyenne and Laramie it happened. Monty got out to pop away at some Jackrabbits that were quite numerous. I thought I'd do a bitta poppin too. Must have got the buck fever or sumthin, a rabbit started runnin and I started poppin. And who was between me and the rabbit, old man Schuster. How I missed him I'll never know, but God musta been with him, the bullets only whined past his barn door ears. Well fellers from there on my life was one hell. He sure hated my guts to use an elegant expression. So I stuck it out thru Wyo., Utah, Nevada, and into Frisco. Schuster wired on to Buffalo if that damn Kid stays with us I quit, so I never got to Paris. Anyway I took in Death Valley and then through California. Something I knew in Frisco the papers never heered about was that during the night the entire motor was replaced by another. Now it can come out.

Going back a bit we had to ride the railroad tracks of the Union Pacific between Promontory Point and Ely, Nev. Not on the tracks but on the ties. This was as I remember about five miles as there was no road. In a small town called Twin Springs where the town consisted of one cabin the Thomas was so deeply stuck in the mud they had to take the body off and have it finally dragged out by horses. Schuster borrowed the miner's horse to go to Tonapah for help. Was I glad to see that hombre get out of my sight. Many times I wish I had clipped the galoot, if only to slice off part of his hindquarters.

Anyway I finally made shots of the Thomas coming up Market Street in Frisco and that was my last bit of photography as far as that trip went. From there on a feller by the name of McAvoy or sumthin like that from the N. Y. Times took over, I sold my

camera to him and he wrote the stories and took the photos. I was plenty satisfied to quit, I had plenty. Now the idea was for the car to be shipped by boat to Seattle, then drive up to the Yukon Pass and go over the Berling Straits over the ice into Russia. Oh sure, they got to the Yukon Pass alright but it was so blocked with snow it was impossible. So back to Seattle, then a boat over to Japan, across Japan into Russia and then down through Europe to Paris where they finally made it.

Then I spent a few days in Frisco photographing the city which still showed many parts where the earthquake had left buildings in ruins. Now between Cheyenne and Ogden, Utah, I had one great pal from the Denver Post. Named Charles E. Van Loon who later wrote great baseball stories for the Sat. Eve. Post, and also for the N. Y. American. Where Schuster hated me, Van Loon took a great liking to the Kid. So much in fact that after I had spent six nights and five days on a train getting back to N. Y. he wired me if I would consider a job on the Post. Would I? Three days after getting Ma used to my being home again I was on my way to Denver and kept that job about a year before going back home. On that job I had plenty of experiences in the Wild and Woolly West, but somehow never did meet up with Young Wild West, he was away chasing Indians or sumthin. I could give ye plenty on that job too fellers, but I don't want to bore you if I ain't already. Mabe I'll write about some of the things I covered out there in 1908, six hundred mile horse races between Evanston, Wyo., and Denver, the National Democratic Convention they had there that year, etc.

But think of it fellers, for my labors on that auto race I received the princely sum of ten bucks a week. With all my expenses paid of course and when we put up for the night they spent plenty. No windshields on the cars, my face was like a piece of raw beefsteak and in a cold room it felt too hot. And the payoff was that Mother was to get the ten from the firm who hired me, every week, and she sure needed it. At Ogden I had a letter from her saying she never received a cent and I wired the firm right pronto, either send Mother the money or I quit right



here. Three hours later wire arrived, money sent to Mother, keep going you are doing fine pictures very good. And I would have quit too I was that mad.

By the way the trip from Times Sq. N. Y. to Frisco took the American car 1 month and 26 days, so you can imagine what they went through in those days to go that distance, in the winter.

The entire crew including myself had been invited to have dinner at Buffalo Bill's home in North Platt, Neb. Bill himself was away, but they sure served a swell meal for the gang. I forget who the heck was there, it's so long ago, but I think it was his wife and a couple servants, most likely just hired for the occasion.

### NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings, Editor

Wallace H. Waldrop says: I see by the local paper that the librarians are still criticizing the adventure type of books as published for juvenile readers. It is high time that we who love good reading, should hit back at such unfair, unjust criticism. Maybe they want all the children to read Jack and the Beanstalk, and other fables which tend to teach one to take things which do not belong to them. I can't understand why these people recommend such trash for the Juvenile reader, and then condemn such stories as the Nancy Drew series of stories. I think that some of these old librarians are really "teched" in the head. Anyway, how about you getting in touch with some good writer (or do it yourself) and have a good writeup in some good prominent magazine about this undue criticism?

Edward Le Blanc, 36 Taylor St., Fall River, Mass., wants Old Cap Collier #220 Bob Denville, Fall River Detective. New York Ten Cent Library, Dike Book Co., #3 King Dan the Factory Detective. A rattling story of the Spindle City, by George W. Goode. Eureka Detective Series #25. Reprint of above. If I am not mistaken I saw this one the last time I visited you but mistook for another book. Nick Carter Weekly #278. Nick Carter as a Mill Hand or, The Fall River Murder Mystery Revealed.

G. Fred Orphal reports that the late

Charles Austin's son, Ralph W. Austin recently had a slight stroke, so he has to use a cane. He and his wife are on their way to Florida to live, he will sell his East Rockaway home.

James Babel says his son Emil began to smoke cigarettes at the age of 6, at the age of 7 he inhaled the smoke. By the time that he was 18, when he went to work at his father's restaurant at 134 W. 27th St., N. Y., he seemed, his father said, to be afire within. He drank anything he could get his hands on, wine, whiskey, beer, ice water, tea or coffee. He would take a cigarette out of his mouth just long enough to drink. A year ago Emil was put in a hospital, on July 30th he died. His father reported his death to the coroners office and said it was due to cigarettes. The lad was 24 years old. Those who know Emil say he smoked 15 packages a day. (See Boys of N. Y., Sept. 19th, 1892, No. 891, for above account.)

There is an article of the Life of ye Editor in Wm. H. Ganders Story Paper Collector #38, April 1950 issue.

Fred Lee and his mother have been very sick with the flu, but are coming along very good now.

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Wakefield escaped severe burns when her robe caught on fire a few weeks ago. Clyde put the fire out quickly, and burned his hands some.

Ye editor Cummings will enter the hospital March 22nd for an operation on piles, so I'm getting the Roundup fixed up ahead of time. Will wait and see if any ads come in.

John E. Kime says in the January 1950 issue of Blue Book there's a special article on "A Century of Whodunits" one of the pictures is from a Sherlock Holmes story about 1887.

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## PARTIAL LIST OF MEMBERS FOR 1950 ETC.

- 79. Fred Lee, 4050 Cornelius Ave., Indianapolis 8, Ind.
- 110. Henry Lofgren, 2306 Florence St., Blue Island, Ill.
- 144. Richard E. Stolt, 1906 W. Belle Plaine Ave., Chicago 13, Ill. (new address)
- 161. Morris Branner, 632 W. Montgomery Ave., Phila. 22, Pa.
- 193. F. Algar, 75 York Road, Ilford, Essex, England.
- 194. W. H. Bradshaw, 3644 N. Oakley St., Chicago 18, Ill.
- 195. Frank C. Wilson, 1019 Main St., Melrose 76, Mass.

## FOR SALE

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N. Y. Clipper—famous old magazine of circus, show folks, base ball, etc. of the 1900 to 1907 era, but mostly after 1900. 12 for \$5.00. Fine condition. Full of old song ads, pictures—they are corkers!

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Dime Novels and Story Papers, galore. What's wanted?

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NOTICE: In June, I leave for six months in Kezar Falls, Me., so don't wait—order now.

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Do you own or do you know a collector (or library) who does own one or more of the following?

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If you own one or more of the above and do not want to sell, PLEASE drop me a card, anyway, as it is important that a census be made of the known copies of these novels for the files and information of an important New Mexico museum library.

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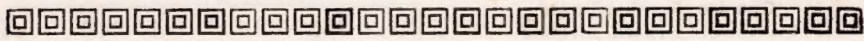
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Jack Johnson, In the Ring and Out, by himself. 1st ed. Fine. 1927. Jacketed. \$2.  
Pirate Story Series #1 to 5, the set, for \$1.00 fine condition.

**Ralph F. Cummings**

**Fisherville, Mass.**

